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*539 NOW there was a Sultan from amongst the Sultans who ruled Iraq before the days of the Ottomans, and his name was Hajji Ali. And this Sultan had only one son, the Amir Kheyyun, who was a youth of twenty years, so handsome of the face that when he passed through the city the people would come out and throng the streets, and so dense were the crowds that not even a flea could pass through the town. And the Amir Kheyyun was famous in battle, for he commanded the armies of the Sultan, and he challenged the enemies of the Sultan his father to single combat, and used to kill them [593] in front of their armies. And he obeyed the commands of the Sultan his father in everything, for this is the custom of the Arabs.

So one day the Sultan, Hajji Ali, sent for his son, Kheyyun, and he said: In this world only one thing is certain and only one thing is known, and that is that death comes to every man, nor can a single man escape from it. And the time is not long nor shall many years pass before you are Sultan of this land in my place, but (may it be far from you) when you are dead who shall replace you? Therefore it is now suitable that you take a wife. But Kheyyun, the obedient son, refused the command of his father, nor did he heed his words. And he said: I have studied the matter, and I have read every book concerning women, which has been written by every wise man and philosopher of Iraq, of Persia, of India, of China and of Rome, and I have come to the conclusion that women are evil, and they are witches, nor is there truth and goodness in them. Therefore, how can a man take one of them for a wife?

*539 And the Sultan thought: This is only the foolishness of
• 626 youth. I will command my son to marry in the presence

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*539 of my ministers, my advisers, and my troops, then,
• 626 through shame, he cannot disobey me. And he summoned his court, his ministers, and his troops, and he sent for the sheikhs and leading men of the country, and the palace was thronged with a great crowd, and he sent for his son, the Amir Kheyyun.

*539 And the Sultan spoke and said: It is long since we have
527 had celebrations and rejoicing as is fitting in a great city on the occasion of a royal marriage or the birth of an heir to the throne. I therefore command and order the Minister of Finance to produce a sum of one hundred thousand dirhems, and that each of the sheikhs of the tribes shall bring one thousand Syrian sheep, and each of the great merchants shall bring one thousand bags of the finest rice of Amara and of El Huweiza, and the Governor of Basra shall bring one thousand boatloads of the sweetest dates in Basra, and the Maadan shall bring milk, and the people of Mosul shall bring honey, and of Baquba, fruit, and from each town and village shall come the fruits and crops and vegetables of that village. And for every day of the first month of the new year one thousand sheep shall be killed and roasted and stuffed with walnuts and almonds, nor shall any man in the city go hungry, and the travellers and the people of the desert shall also be satisfied, for in that auspicious month will be celebrated the wedding of my son, the Amir Kheyyun, the beloved.

*539 And the Amir Kheyyun stood up in front of his father,
593 and he said: No. Then the faces of the great sheikhs and the great merchants and the captains of ships and the commanders of troops and the learned men became red with shame, for amongst the Arabs it is not fitting that a son speak in front of his father and into his father's face.